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Monday, 11 December 2006, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Al-Nasser	(Qatar)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Biabaroh-Iboro
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Shinyo
	Peru	Mr. Voto-Bernales
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Matulay
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004) (S/2006/945)

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06-65176 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004) (S/2006/945)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iraq in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Qazi to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2006/945, containing the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004).

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and by Ms. Jackie Wolcott Sanders, representative of the United States, on behalf of the Multinational Force.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ashraf Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq.

Mr. Qazi: The Secretary-General's report before the Security Council provides a sober and urgent warning that Iraq stands on the brink of a civil war and chaos. In my briefings to this Council, I have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that the achievements of the political transition process in meeting the benchmarks endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 1546 (2004) have not translated into an improved security or human rights situation. Efforts made by the Government of Iraq and the Multinational Force have not prevented a continuous deterioration of the security situation, which, if not reversed, will progressively undermine Iraq's political prospects.

Initiatives launched during the period, such as the 2 October Ramadan declaration, the meetings sponsored by the Ministry of National Dialogue, and the Mecca Declaration, under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as yet have had no impact on the violence and bloodshed. The Baghdad security plan, aimed at isolating troubled neighbourhoods and improving living conditions for their residents, has not expanded beyond the initially selected areas. The violence seems out of control. This has provoked widespread concern for Iraq's future.

While 8 out of 18 governorates account for 80 per cent of the attacks on the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I) and the Iraqi security forces (ISF), those 8 governorates account for a significant proportion of Iraq's population. The restoration of peace and stability in the capital and its surrounding areas is therefore critical to the peace and stability of Iraq as a whole.

Given the current lack of political unity, the fragmentation of Iraqi society and the paralyzing levels of violence, it may not be realistic to expect the Government and parliament to bring about progress without the active cooperation of the regional and international community. Nor in these circumstances can multilateral partnerships, such as the International Compact for Iraq, be expected to realize their full potential, since they are predicated on the Iraqi Government being able to implement the requisite political, security, economic and social reforms. The International Compact will itself require a viable

security and political environment. Accordingly, it is very encouraging to note that the Iraqi Prime Minister and his Cabinet have indicated their full commitment to making the Compact process a success.

Vigorous efforts are under way to build up Iraq's armed forces and put in place effective command and control, disciplinary and organizational structures. Significant progress is being made in some respects. However, even under the most propitious of circumstances, the development of self-sufficient security forces of the requisite professional capability and political discipline is expected to take some years, and may take much longer. Moreover, the key issues confronting Iraq are not amenable to solutions based on force alone. Excessive reliance on the use of force could indeed preclude negotiated compromise — the only sound basis for stability.

If Iraq is to stand any chance of avoiding a national catastrophe, a collective sense of urgency, resolve and compromise is essential. Zero-sum solutions are not compatible with political stability and national security. Accordingly, the international community and regional States have a real stake in assisting the Government of Iraq to overcome the current challenges. There is no merit in arguments that assume pessimistic outcomes in Iraq, because for the people of Iraq, for its neighbours and for the wider world, failure in Iraq is not an option. A collective international and regional initiative in support of the efforts of the Government of Iraq to reduce the current levels of violence and resolve key issues is the only way forward. There is no alternative.

In my discussions with Iraqi leaders from across the spectrum and with many representatives of many of Iraq's neighbours, I have been struck by the unanimity with which they now recognize that Iraq's problems cannot be addressed by concentrating exclusively on the domestic political dynamics of Iraq alone. Therefore, a broader and more inclusive political approach is required that involves all the main neighbours of Iraq, as well as the P-5 countries. It must also involve all the main political forces inside Iraq that are prepared to foreswear violence as a political tool and to come to the negotiating table. An exclusionary approach, whether internal or external, will not result in progress towards peace and stability.

None of this alters the fact that the Iraqis above all must take responsibility for their future. Yet the structure of the situation in and around Iraq requires that all regional countries see that it is in their interest to contribute to the peace and unity of Iraq as a matter of priority and to participate in efforts to ensure that their contributions collectively assist the Government and people of Iraq. In this respect, it is encouraging to note that the Government of Iraq has decided to send envoys to its neighbours to prepare the ground for a possible regional conference.

To replace the current climate of fear and mistrust, a reconciliation process should address sensitive issues rather than postpone consideration of them. In his report, the Secretary-General draws attention to the way in which a genuine constitutional review process could provide the framework for national reconciliation. To date, the opportunity provided by this review process has not been seized as effectively as the United Nations had hoped and advised. Technical revision needs to be backed by genuine political negotiation on key issues aimed at making the constitution a genuinely workable national framework document.

The issues on which Iraqi consensus is urgently needed are clear. They include a political vision for the new Iraq, a fair sharing of oil revenues that guarantees all the peoples of Iraq an equal share in its unity and prosperity, a realistic sharing of powers, including collection of taxes among the centre, the regions and the governorates that enables the central Government to deliver essential services, the development of Iraq's security forces into genuine national institutions that are trusted and respected throughout the country, the progressive disbanding of militias and other illegal armed groups so that the State has a monopoly over the use of force as the guarantor of the rule of law, ensuring effective human rights protection systems and an effective judiciary, encouraging Iraqi civil society to foster the emergence of issue-based, non-sectarian politics, and finding a mutually acceptable way to discuss the future of the MNF-I's role as a key component of a national reconciliation process. In this regard, it is again encouraging to note that the Government of Iraq is actively preparing for a national reconciliation conference on, I understand, 18 December and that progress on a draft text for a hydrocarbon law has been made.

In his report, the Secretary-General has suggested that a regional contact group, assisted by the United Nations, could serve as the catalyst to bring about a

credible forum where such issues could be discussed and progressively resolved. There is an urgent need to develop a momentum for peace and stability in Iraq through an intensive and sustained engagement with the regional and international community in support of the Government of Iraq's national reconciliation efforts.

The Secretary-General has called for a negotiated settlement to break the cycle of violence that currently threatens to abort any political progress. This will be a complex and difficult task, but one that is unavoidable. The human costs of the present situation make it mandatory upon all of us to assist the Government of Iraq in discharging its role successfully. According to some estimates, the humanitarian and human rights crisis is arguably already the most compelling in the world. According to some estimates, more than 5,000 Iraqis die violent deaths a month. Since the Samarra incident of 22 February 2006, nearly half a million Iraqis have been internally displaced. The exodus of Iraqis to neighbouring countries is placing a heavy burden on those countries. In the event of a further deterioration of the security situation, a major humanitarian and refugee catastrophe could ensue.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has been repeatedly reminded of the high expectations that Iraqis have of the United Nations in enabling the protection of their rights and bringing an end to their suffering by facilitating processes that can put the promise of peace and security within their grasp.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the Security Council for its continued support, as most recently expressed in resolution 1700 (2006). I wish to assure Council members that the United Nations Mission will remain actively engaged with national, regional and international actors to help Iraq arrest the further deterioration of an already critical situation. That is a moral and strategic imperative that none of us can afford to ignore.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Qazi for his briefing on the most recent developments in the situation in Iraq and for his efforts in that country.

Ms. Wolcott Sanders (United States of America): As requested by the Security Council in resolutions 1546 (2004), 1637 (2005) and 1723 (2006), I am pleased to report to the Security Council, on behalf of the 25 countries making up the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF-I), on the Force's progress towards fulfilling its mandate.

There have been a number of important developments in this reporting period. We welcome the Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 1723 (2006) to extend the Multinational Force mandate and the arrangements for the Development Fund for Iraq and the International Advisory and Monitoring Board. The MNF-I continues to play a vital role in the security and stability of Iraq and to work in partnership with Iraqi authorities to support the transition of security responsibility to Iraqi security forces. As noted in the 17 November letter from the Secretary of State to the Council President in support of the Multinational Force mandate (S/2006/899, annex), the Government of Iraq and the MNF have three common goals: Iraqi assumption of recruiting, training, equipping and arming of the Iraqi security forces; Iraqi assumption of command and control over Iraqi forces; and transferring responsibility for security to the Government of Iraq.

The Iraqi Government has made progress on its ambitious reform agenda. On 10 October, the Iraqi Council of Representatives adopted a new foreign investment law. The Council also passed a federal regions law on 11 October that will allow Iraq's provinces to hold referendums to merge themselves into larger federal regions. That law is to come into effect in 2008. In addition, a constitutional review committee was established on 25 September to explore options for amending the Iraqi Constitution.

Progress continues as well on the International Compact with Iraq, an Iraqi initiative to create a new partnership with the international community and build a strong framework for Iraq's continued political, security and economic transformation and integration into the regional and global economy. The final preparatory meeting took place in Kuwait on 31 October, and the Compact was endorsed unanimously by the Iraqi Council of Ministers on 26 November. The Compact is expected to be finalized by early next year, we hope, with broad and active international support.

Despite progress on those fronts, security remains a grave concern. Sunni insurgent attacks against the Iraqi security forces and the MNF-I remain at high levels, and the forces continue to experience attacks

from armed Shia groups, especially in the Baghdad region. At the same time, sectarian violence, much of it directed toward civilians, has increased.

Insurgents, extremists and terrorists continue their attacks. The ongoing violence continues to take a toll on the country and its people. The number of attacks increased 22 per cent over this reporting period, attributed in part to a spike in violence during Ramadan. Fifty-four per cent of all attacks occurred in two of Iraq's 18 provinces, Baghdad and Anbar, although violence was significant in Diyala province and in the cities of Kirkuk, Mosul, Basra, Al Amarah and Balad. The Multinational Force in Iraq and Iraqi security forces continued joint efforts to address security in Baghdad and Basra.

More Iraqi units are taking the lead in combat operations against the insurgency. In October, the Fourth Iraqi Army division planned, coordinated and executed an Iraqi-controlled division-level operation in Kirkuk in response to the spike of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devise attacks just prior to and during Ramadan. The operation was the first division-level plan executed under control of the Iraqi ground forces command headquarters.

The rise of sectarian violence has become the greatest threat to security and stability in Iraq. Approximately 80 per cent of the sectarian violence in Iraq happens within a 35-mile radius of Baghdad. In response to the worsening situation, Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Maliki announced a four-point plan on 2 October to unite Shia and Sunni parties in his Government behind the drive to stop sectarian killings that have plagued the country. The Iraqi Government has also sponsored a series of four reconciliation conferences across Iraq aimed at promoting a national dialogue and soliciting recommendations for action. Two meetings of tribal leaders and civil society have already taken place. In October, the Organization of the Islamic Conference hosted a gathering of Sunni and Shiite religious leaders in Mecca, which called for an end to sectarian bloodshed in Iraq.

While infrastructure attacks have decreased, they average one per week and hamper the provision of essential services, such as electrical power, water and fuel. The ongoing attacks and the difficult security environment are impediments to improving the supply of those essential services. The Iraqi infrastructure will continue to be a high-value target for disruptive elements.

The Multinational Force in Iraq continues to train, develop and contribute to the capabilities and readiness of Iraqi security forces. Iraq is making progress in building security forces that are capable of independently combating insurgents and fighting terrorists. The Ministry of Defence and Interior security forces continue to increase in size and capability, and are increasingly taking over leadership roles in fighting insurgents and terrorists. On 21 September, MNF-I transferred Dhi Qar Province to provincial Iraqi control, putting security responsibility in the hands of the provincial Governor and his local police force of 10,000. The Multinational Force continues to support and assist the Iraqi security forces as they move towards conducting fully independent operations and achieving security self-reliance.

The number of counter-insurgency operations conducted independently by Iraqi forces as a percentage of total combat operations continues to increase steadily. One hundred and six Iraqi army and special operations battalions and 11 strategic infrastructure battalions are now conducting counter-insurgency operations, with 98 battalions assessed as capable of taking the lead in operations or of operating independently.

The Iraqi Government, alongside MNF-I, has identified a force structure to maintain a security environment that will provide a basis for transitioning Iraq to security self-reliance. The authorized end-strength force structure of Iraqi armed forces is 137,500 personnel, including one Iraqi ground forces command, 10 divisions and 36 brigade headquarters, 114 army and special operations battalions, 17 strategic infrastructure battalions, six air force squadrons, three navy squadrons, and 19 combat support battalions.

The Iraq Ministry of the Interior, with the assistance of MNF-I, has begun a multi-phased national transformation plan to assess National Police battalions' current capabilities, reinforce police training, and establish practices for continuing education of the police forces. The end-strength force structure for all Ministry of the Interior forces is 188 ˆ00 trained and equipped personnel manning two division headquarters, nine brigade headquarters, and 27 combat battalions. The force structure plan is designed to enable a stable civil security environment

that leads to a democratic and representative Government and a prosperous economy.

As of 13 November, six Iraqi army division headquarters, 30 brigade headquarters and 91 battalions have the security lead in their areas of operation. Those numbers reflect approximately 70 per cent of the Iraqi army. The Multinational Force has transferred 55 of the 110 forward operating bases to Iraqi control.

The United Nations continues to play a crucial role in Iraq's stability and development. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is providing important expertise under its mandate, which was extended in August 2006 for another year under resolution 1700 (2006).

Due to security concerns, the United Nations recently decided temporarily to reduce staff positions in Baghdad. A robust UNAMI presence remains essential to supporting Iraqi efforts, including on national reconciliation, constitutional review and future provincial elections. The UNAMI presence will also be crucial in taking forward work on the International Compact jointly with the Government of Iraq. In addition to Baghdad, the United Nations has limited representation in Irbil and Basra. MNF-I continues to assist UNAMI and to help it achieve its goal for a full, robust and secure presence in Iraq.

Multinational forces, notably the Georgian, Romanian and South Korean contingents, continue to provide security for the United Nations in Baghdad, Basra and Irbil, respectively. Those troops provide static site security, reconnaissance, security patrols, convoy escorts, checkpoints and, when necessary, medical and emergency evacuation. Contributions to the Trust Fund to Support the Distinct Entity Created to Provide Security for the United Nations Presence in Iraq will ensure continued support for that critical security function. Under a separate United Nations agreement, Fijian troops also provide static and close-in protection for United Nations personnel and facilities in Baghdad.

The implementation of Iraq's national reconciliation plan will be an important component in the Government's efforts to build a united country. Concerted efforts to control sectarian violence and confront the insurgency remain critically important to Iraq's future. Training and equipping of the Iraqi security forces continues, and we anticipate a continued process of transferring security responsibility for specific areas from MNF-I to the Iraqi authorities. MNF-I continues to support the Iraqi Government as it prepares to assume full responsibility for the country's security.

Iraq's stability and security is a regional issue as well as an international issue, and Iraq's neighbours have an important role to play. We call on the entire international community to support Iraq's sovereign Government and assist efforts for a democratic, united and prosperous Iraq.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would also like to thank Ambassador Qazi for his introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/945). I also wish to thank Ambassador Wolcott Sanders for her briefing.

Allow me to make the following comments.

Unfortunately, my delegation agrees with the observations made by the Secretary-General. We reiterate our deep concern about the increasing violence and great suffering of the Iraqi people. The numbers set out in his report are terrible: more than 7,000 persons killed in two months — 5,000 of them in Baghdad — over 1.5 million internally displaced persons and 1.6 million refugees outside the country. The violence, which is becoming increasingly sectarian, threatens the very unity of the country and poses risks to the stability of the region. Given that situation, today each of us clearly realizes the need to explore new solutions. From the point of view of my delegation, those should be based on three pillars.

The first is to relaunch the Iraqi political process to allow for reconciliation and acceptance of the new institutions by all members of society. In that regard, we hope that the proposals of Prime Minister Al-Maliki on the holding of a national reconciliation conference will be followed up positively. We also agree with the Secretary-General that the constitutional review — a concept that was agreed in October 2005 — is a key element in establishing national consensus. We would also like to commend the efforts of Mr. Qazi and the in-depth dialogue he is carrying out with all Iraqi officials.

The second pillar is to restore Iraq's sovereignty. France has always believed that a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign troops could contribute to stabilizing the situation. My delegation is pleased to

note that prospects for such a withdrawal, which are of course contingent upon a sovereign decision by Iraq, have been very clearly set out for the first time in resolution 1723 (2006). The establishment of the Iraqi Government's authority could also provide a way of achieving a solution to the critical problem of militias. The latest human rights report of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq states that they have been operating with "almost total impunity".

With regard to the third pillar, namely, the support of the countries of the region and the international community, French Minister for Foreign Affairs Philippe Douste-Blazy recently recalled that all the countries of the region must be brought on board once they have shown a willingness to contribute to Iraq's stability.

France is also considering with interest the Secretary-General's idea for an international conference that includes all Iraqi protagonists and external actors concerned — potentially along the lines of the November 2005 meeting at Sharm el-Sheikh. Such an initiative could help to reach collective decisions on measures aimed at guaranteeing the unity, sovereignty and independence of Iraq. We are prepared to consider proposals by the Secretary-General, along with any clarifications that Mr. Qazi may eventually make, in particular as regards prospects for a regional dialogue and an international conference.

France is aware of the difficulties of the situation in Iraq and of the very courageous efforts by the people and leaders of that country. The international community must continue to play its role in assisting Iraq and its leaders. France intends to play its full part in that regard.

In that connection, my delegation would like to commend the contribution made by the Secretary-General in his latest report. We pay tribute to his outstanding efforts in the past 10 years in connection with the issue of Iraq. To echo his comments, it was one of his greatest challenges.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I wish to thank Ambassador Ashraf Qazi for his lucid and comprehensive briefing on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq and on recent developments in that country. I would also like to thank Ambassador Jackie Wolcott Sanders for her briefing on the activities of the Multinational Force in Iraq. Finally, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for submitting the tenth report (S/2006/945) to the Security Council on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Both the briefing by Ambassador Qazi and the report of the Secretary-General paint an alarming picture of Iraq. Of course, through the media, we all have the chance to see on a daily basis the carnage that is taking place in Iraq. It is not important to try to find the most appropriate adjective to describe the current situation there. What is important is the fact that hundreds of people are being killed and wounded daily. No matter what label we attach to that, the current reality in Iraq is unacceptable by any standard.

The alarming deterioration of the security situation in the country, despite the successful completion of the transitional political process as envisaged in resolution 1546 (2004), begs the question: "What should be done now?" That question needs to be answered not only by the Iraqi Government and by the Government of the United States, which leads the Multinational Force in Iraq, but also by the United Nations, and by the Security Council in particular.

For the two years that Greece has served as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, much of our attention was focused on the political process in the hope that progress and success in that field would have a positive impact on the security situation. We genuinely hope and believe that an all-inclusive and participatory political process will pave the way for national reconciliation and for the consolidation of national understanding based on the institutionalization of a consensus-building national dialogue enshrined in the constitution and supplemented by the Constitutional Review Committee.

Iraqis were to take their fate and their destiny into their own hands by opting for democracy, peace, stability, unity and prosperity for the benefit of all Iraqis regardless of race, allegiance, sect or tribe — a common goal for a common promising future. So far, that has not materialized.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/945) provides us with an overview of the current situation and an outline of new approaches needed at the national, regional and international levels, in order to achieve concrete results on all fronts — security, political, economic and human rights — and to reverse current political and security trends in the country. While we share many of the observations contained in

the report of the Secretary-General, what will be required before we can continue to build upon what has been achieved so far — for much has been achieved in Iraq over the past three years, notwithstanding the security situation — is an in-depth analytical understanding of the reasons that lie behind the increase in sectarian violence and insurgent and terrorist attacks, as well as in criminal activities. An in-depth look into what is fuelling sectarian violence and what is causing insurgent and terrorist attacks and into what is allowing criminal activities to thrive may help to reveal what are the most appropriate instruments to put into play to help address those challenges effectively.

There must be help towards creating a national compact to complement the International Compact and to assess and reassess the posture of the Iraqi security forces in countering and preventing terrorist attacks and criminal activities, including possibly by broadening the scope of existing initiatives to include, inter alia, either the permanent members of the Security Council, as suggested in the report, or even the newly established Peacebuilding Commission.

Even though our tenure on the Security Council is coming to an end, Greece will continue to support and to actively follow all efforts aimed at assisting Iraq's fledgling democracy to flourish and to thrive so that we may quickly see a prosperous, unified, pluralistic Iraq in which there is full respect for the human rights of all Iraqis and for the rule of law — an Iraq that will be at peace with itself and with all its neighbours, and a valuable partner in the international community.

Mr. Estremé (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, on behalf of the Argentine delegation, I wish to thank Mr. Qazi for his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Iraq (S/2006/945). In general, my delegation is in agreement with the main comments and recommendations of that report. I also thank Ambassador Wolcott Sanders for her presentation on behalf of the Multinational Force.

Bearing in mind that this is probably the last time my country will have the opportunity to take the floor on this subject as part of its current mandate as a member of the Security Council, I wish to present some comments concerning recent developments in the situation in Iraq, and future prospects based on that difficult situation.

Over the past two years, the Argentine delegation has sought to support the approach proposed for the normalization of the situation in Iraq, according to which, as the political process advanced and Iraqi sovereignty was restored, the level of violence would decrease and Iraq would stabilize as a sovereign country. As part of that process, democratic institutions would be consolidated, responsibility for security would be transferred from the Multinational Force to Iraqi forces and the extremist elements who supposedly were the main causes of the violence would be isolated.

The current situation in Iraq shows that that approach has not been effective and that a new strategy must be considered — both internally and internationally — in order to normalize the situation in the country and to avoid a civil war which would have devastating consequences for the entire region.

Argentina cannot fail to express its alarm at the suffering of the Iraqi civilian population. Quite apart from the statistics, which vary in terms of the number of civilians who have died or have been displaced as a result of the violence since March 2003, it is evident that the Iraqi people are suffering a crisis of great proportions. The humanitarian situation involving human rights is extremely serious in Iraq.

At this stage of events, it is clear that the deterioration in the security situation has not resulted exclusively from the actions of extremist or terrorist groups. That analysis has been shown to be superficial and ignores a much deeper reality: a sectarian conflict that has been complicated by the actions of sectarian militias and death squads which, in some cases, are connected with Iraqi political parties. The high daily number of victims of the conflict not only contributes to the increasing feeling of insecurity, but also generates a massive displacement of people and feeds into Iraqi society's pessimism about the future.

The political and constitutional process, unfortunately, has not had the positive effect we would have liked to see and has not contributed to creating a climate of reconciliation and harmony among all Iraqi communities, as had been predicted. Despite the efforts made over the last three and a half years, it has not been possible to build Iraqi security forces capable of meeting the challenges that Iraq continues to face. Hence, thus the presence of international forces continues to be necessary. We remind all forces that are

working to maintain security in Iraq — whether Iraqi or international — of their obligation to respect, under all circumstances, human rights and the provisions of international humanitarian law.

The deterioration of human development indicators in Iraq in recent times is an additional sign of the long-term effects of the situation and of its extremely negative effects on health, education and social services, the economic situation and unemployment. At stake is the future and viability of Iraq as an independent and united State.

That gloomy picture indicates that if the situation is not reversed, Iraq will continue to descend into civil war. In order to avoid that situation, a new strategy must be urgently designed for Iraq that will include complementary elements at the local, regional and international levels. The Iraqi Government has the primary responsibility to move that process forward and should promote an inclusive political process encompassing all communities. In order to do that, key decisions must be taken with regard to the distribution of natural resources to benefit all sectors of Iraqi society and to develop genuinely representative political institutions.

Recently, some positive initial measures have been taken. These should be strengthened through a genuine process of constitutional reform which after significant delay has recently been launched. Additional efforts should also be made to promote reconciliation. In that regard, there exist some national and regional initiatives such as that of the League of Arab States, and they should be explored in all their aspects. All national strategies should be complemented by additional measures on a regional level. Without an active participation of countries in the region in the process of normalization of the situation in Iraq, all efforts at the national and international level will be in vain.

At this level, there are already some concrete initiatives that show some possibilities and they should be studied by this Council. On the international level, we should sustain and support the efforts being carried out on the other two levels. Within this framework, the hosting of an international conference on Iraq could be a useful mechanism to demonstrate the support of the international community for the future of Iraq. We believe that all interested parties should be invited to participate in this conference, including all of Iraq's neighbours.

In parallel, we should continue with our efforts to launch the International Compact with Iraq, which will establish a framework for cooperation in the medium and long term between the international community and Iraq.

The role of the United Nations in these three areas is crucial. While we are grateful for efforts undertaken up until now and we would like to acknowledge the work that has been done by Special Representative Qazi, we believe that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) must provide active support to the work being done in the three areas that we have mentioned in order to harmonize the work in all of these three areas.

In the current difficult circumstances, the options facing Iraq are clear. Either the country continues along the path of sectarian violence and civil war, or it reverses this trend, favouring harmony and unity. Argentina hopes that, in the end, the people and the leaders of Iraq will choose the second option and that this Council will support this strategic decision.

Mr. Voto-Bernales (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank Mr. Qazi for his briefing, as well as the representative of the United States for the report on the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF).

The circumstances under which we are meeting today are critical for Iraq. The situation has gotten worse and it could get even worse. There has been an intensification of the sectarian violence. We are far from a reconciliation. Reconstruction is not advancing and hopes are turning into desperation. We are a long way from a stable, sovereign, united, democratic and pluralistic Iraq that we wanted to build after the transition established by Security Council resolution 1546 (2004).

The report of the Secretary-General and all of the information provided by independent sources from the area indicate clearly that, given the external intervention and the internal political situation, the outlook in Iraq is very gloomy. The level of deterioration of the situation should lead to significant changes in the strategic orientation and in the identification of new ways and means that are

necessary to bring about stability in Iraq. It is necessary to act to deal with this reality.

The security and humanitarian situation, the social conditions and the political landscape are all areas which show extensive deficiencies. The result is that the predominant social sentiment in the civilian population is that of helplessness and despair. The reconstitution of social fabric and credibility for the Iraqi people are essential to move out of the crisis.

It is obvious that we need to address simultaneously all of these aspects. We need to give a greater space for political dialogue to promote participation and commitment, even beyond the territory of Iraq, without forgetting the protection of the civilian population, in order to avoid open conflict which some extremists are trying to precipitate. The Iraqis, first and foremost, their Government, and the neighbouring countries and the main players of the international system present in Iraq and the international community should be involved urgently in the current situation to support stability in Iraq.

In this respect, Peru supports all initiatives that will contribute to restoring trust between the various sectors of Iraq, whether that be of domestic origin, such as the Constitutional review process, or measures promoted by the League of Arab States or the Organization of the Islamic Conference, for example. All of these initiatives can contribute to bringing about national reconciliation.

Peru condemns the sectarian violence and the acts of intolerance. We reject all terrorist acts that have been committed in Iraq. We consider that those responsible for security in Iraq should fulfil their duty to protect civilians and maintain the rule of law as well as the fundamental rights of citizens. We must remember that there will be no democracy in Iraq if impunity continues. We also hope that the establishment of institutions such as the national human rights commission will be able to be brought about as soon as possible in order to move forward towards building the rule of law and a legal system.

The reconstruction task in Iraq is another central aspect. Unfortunately, in that area, once again, there are significant delays. There is a lack of investment that has an impact on the economy and public services, such as health, which has given rise to some disturbing indicators. The international community must continue its support to restore the economy. The International Compact with Iraq is a positive initiative that is moving in the right direction.

Finally, my delegation would like to express its support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI). We believe that it should continue in accordance with its mandate and to the extent possible on the ground, to support and consolidate all activities that will lead to political and legal stability, to institutional and economic reconstruction, to the provision of humanitarian assistance and to ensuring that human rights are respected in Iraq.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the report of the Secretary-General. We thank Mr. Qazi for his presentation this morning and Ambassador Sanders for hers on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq (MNF).

The security situation in Iraq is serious. Addressing this situation is the top priority for the Government of Iraq and for the MNF. But military effort is not sufficient to guarantee security. It must be underpinned by a political solution involving genuine reconciliation. We can do even more to support the Prime Minister's efforts aimed at bringing the different parts of Iraq together, so as to give effect to the will of the Iraqi people as expressed in their democratic elections.

Therefore, we strongly support Prime Minister Maliki's National Reconciliation Plan, which provides a framework for political dialogue and disarmament. We also commend the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) to promote this plan.

As set out in the Secretary-General's report, a United Nations-facilitated meeting of Iraq's political parties would offer a useful opportunity for dialogue. Such a meeting might be set up in concert with a meeting of Iraq's neighbours to further the reconciliation process.

The United Nations plays a significant role in the reconstruction of Iraq and in helping Iraq to find the political solutions it needs to guarantee its security. We appreciate the difficult circumstances UNAMI works under and we fully support its efforts. We encourage the United Nations to pursue further steps to improve the security of UNAMI, and to pursue those steps with partners as necessary, including through discussion

with the European Union, so that the United Nations can play its full role in Iraq.

We believe that the continued significant presence of UNAMI is vital to help Iraq continue to make progress in the political process. We urge United Nations Members to contribute further funding to the United Nations Security Trust Fund so as to enable the continued presence of UNAMI.

We support the legal assistance given by UNAMI to the Council of Representatives with regard to the establishment of the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq. Once the draft law has been passed, technical and timely support from UNAMI to build the Commission will be a substantial and important step towards the success of the provincial elections in 2007 and a referendum on the constitutional review.

We welcome the intention of the United Nations to provide strong support to the constitutional review process and an eventual referendum on the status of Kirkuk. The wider experience of the United Nations in this field underlines its importance as an independent mediator and its ability to present technical and impartial advice to the Review Committee and the subcommittees.

We appreciate the role that the United Nations has taken as a co-chair of the International Compact. The Compact provides an opportunity for the wider international community and the Government of Iraq to focus on political, security and economic reform. We welcome the United Nations approach of providing targeted institutional and operational capacity-building support, including the work of the UNAMI Human Rights Office on establishing a national human rights commission. That will help the Government of Iraq to deliver on its commitments.

We welcome the emphasis placed by the Secretary-General on regional dialogue. It is important that all of those who are engaged in Iraq's transition — but particularly those in the region — live up to their responsibilities by supporting the Iraqi Government and ensuring that Iraq is able to proceed down the democratic and non-sectarian path. We welcome Iraq's commitment to the International Compact, made by Prime Minister Al-Maliki in the Baghdad Coordination Group on 10 December, as well as his commitment to the political, economic and security strands. We commend the proposed discussions between Iraq and its neighbours, with the participation of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, who, of course, continues to have a key role to play in and for Iraq.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for today's briefing on the challenging realities in present-day Iraq. We agree with his conclusions and assessments. We have every reason to expect that the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and Mr. Qazi personally will continue their efforts to help the people of that country and that they will remain most actively involved in the political process, acting as mediators among the various Iraqi factions and communities.

It is obvious that the situation in Iraq is extremely complex. Recently, the country has once again been experiencing an acute military and political crisis. Intensive sectarian violence threatens a territorial break-up of the country, and terrorists and insurgents are continuing their activities. Unfortunately, the formulas put forward by the Iraqi authorities and the international community to address the situation, cited by the Special Representative in his briefing, have proved unsatisfactory.

We must make every effort to prevent the eruption of a full-scale civil war in Iraq and to put an end to the rampant activities of militias and armed groups. We must do our utmost to protect the human rights of civilians, who are the primary victims not only of terrorists, but also of the militias. Otherwise, the country's people will have no confidence in the current Government.

We are alarmed at the massacres, arbitrary arrests and secret detention facilities described in the report, along with the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities. The growing exodus of refugees from Iraq and a growing number of internally displaced persons is extremely troubling. In the Middle East, a situation is emerging in which, together with millions of Palestinian refugees, there is now a multitude of people who are leaving Iraq. The destabilizing impact of this turn of events is not hard to imagine.

We are convinced that in order to successfully address the many problems relating to a settlement in Iraq, it is essential to build a society based on national reconciliation and consent. Genuine progress in that area continues to be lacking. We therefore hope that the constitutional review process will enter the concrete

implementation phase and that there will be an inter-Iraqi conference on national unity. We believe that UNAMI and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General must take a most active part in organizing and holding such an essential and long-awaited initiative.

The international community must now do its utmost to provide appropriate and impartial assistance aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement in Iraq. We noted with great interest the idea — referred to in the Secretary-General's report — of establishing a regional group on Iraq that would include the five permanent members of the Security Council. In that regard, we emphasize once again the need for forums such as the Cairo and Sharm el-Sheikh meetings, which enabled representatives of Iraq, neighbouring countries and other interested countries to engage in fruitful exchanges of views. We must keep the potential of such meetings in mind.

In conclusion, we call upon the people of Iraq to exercise restraint and to remain composed at this very challenging and crucial time in the country's history and not to respond to the provocations of extremists, who are seeking to lead the country into the chaos of civil war.

Ms. Taj (United Republic of Tanzania): Allow me to begin by thanking Mr. Qazi for his briefing and the Secretary-General for his tenth quarterly report on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq, particularly those of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (S/2006/945). We also thank Ambassador Sanders for her update on the operations of the Multinational Force in Iraq.

My delegation wishes to commend UNAMI and other United Nations agencies for their dedicated service in Iraq in a most challenging environment. We are gratified to note that they have been able to continue to provide and coordinate access to basic services, including through efforts to restore public infrastructure and to provide assistance to internally displaced persons, whose numbers have been increasing, as we heard from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

The unprecedented level of violence in Iraq is very worrying. It has resulted in many deaths and injuries, damage to property, extreme hardship and suffering. Particularly disturbing is the number of innocent civilians, including women and children, who have fallen victim. The urgency of restoring order — especially in Baghdad — cannot be overemphasized. Regional and international efforts must be enhanced to help contain the current sectarian strife in Iraq and prevent it from escalating further. The war has divided a people who were once seemingly united and has aggravated sectarian differences that had hitherto not been so divisive.

We commend the Iraqi security forces, working in collaboration with the Multinational Force, for their dedication in confronting the violence. But more must be done. Deliberate and determined efforts should be augmented to deal with the extreme violence and replace it with democracy and the rule of law, which we hope the political negotiations on the constitution will also address.

We support the efforts of the Prime Minister, Nuri Al-Maliki, in his search for peace, which has included meeting key international players to seek their support and guidance. We also support the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group and welcome other ideas and contributions that can turn the current situation around. Recent pronouncements and commitments for peace on the part of the neighbouring countries in the region are an important signal that must be capitalized upon.

The work towards an International Compact with Iraq is timely and deserves support from donor countries and financial institutions. Prime Minister Al-Maliki's national reconciliation plan also deserves full support. Consensus-building should include the various divergent communities and their religious leaders. We therefore look forward to the outcome of the conference on national reconciliation scheduled for 18 December.

As they seek to rebuild their institutions, Iraqis will require assistance from the international community. We urge generous and timely support for that war-torn country.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Qazi, for his briefing. We would also like to thank Ambassador Wolcott Sanders of the United States delegation for her briefing.

We have carefully read the report of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, which is very comprehensive and contains some impressive ideas.

The Iraq war ended more than three years ago. Since then the Iraqi people have travelled an extraordinary road. They have overcome many difficulties and basically achieved various benchmarks set out in resolution 1546 (2004). We would like to convey to them heartfelt congratulations for those accomplishments.

However, despite the important progress made in the political process in Iraq, an examination of the current situation there shows that security, economic reconstruction and the protection of human rights remain sources of great concern. The question of Iraq has once again given rise to universal concern. Secretary-General Annan points out that the prospect of all-out civil war and even of regional conflict has become much more real.

The United States Iraq Study Group recently published a report that put forward some new ideas and ways of thinking aimed at resolving the Iraq question. All sides can take this opportunity to reconsider the issue in a comprehensive manner with a view to finding a proper solution and helping Iraq to set out on the road to peace, stability and development at an early date.

China believes that, in order to properly resolve the Iraq question, a number of aspects need to be taken into account.

First, Iraq should continue to promote the national reconciliation process and enhance the inclusiveness of the political process. The realities of the past few months have shown that the sectarian conflict has become a major factor affecting security and stability in Iraq. China welcomes the national reconciliation plan put forward by Prime Minister Al-Maliki. We hope it will effectively encourage all parties to take the overall interests of the country to heart, showing mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and trust for each other, and jointly create a good future.

Secondly, the Iraqi Government should shoulder more responsibilities for maintaining security and law and order in the country so as to restore the popular confidence in the Government. The Multinational Force should also signal that it will not stay in Iraq forever, so as to improve its image in Iraq. Meanwhile, the Iraqi Government and the Multinational Force should realize that it is impossible to resolve the security question solely by military means. It is necessary to deal with the political, economic and security aspects of the problem if it is to be resolved effectively. A national reconciliation process that is broad and inclusive will greatly help all sides to resolve their differences through democratic and peaceful means.

Thirdly, the Iraqi Government should quickly make progress in economic reconstruction and allow the Iraqi people to enjoy real benefits. The International Compact launched jointly by the Iraqi Government and the United Nations provides an important platform for mobilizing international support and crystallizing international consensus. China fully supports the International Compact and hopes that it will be able to play its due role at an early date.

Fourthly, the international community — especially the countries in the region — should come together to help Iraq to achieve stability as soon as possible. The Iraq question cannot be resolved without the support and help of neighbouring countries. Security in Iraq directly impacts the security of all the neighbouring countries. We welcome the periodic regional meetings of the Foreign Ministers and the Ministers of the Interior of Iraq and neighbouring countries. We hope that all sides will continuously increase mutual trust through dialogue.

When the time is right, we could also consider convening an international conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to promote dialogue and understanding.

China has always stood for the maintenance of Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and the proper resolution of the problem through political means. We hope that, with the support and help of the international community, the Iraqi people will, through their tireless efforts, achieve the objective of an Iraq governed by the Iraqi people and restore Iraq to its past glory.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): I would like to join my colleagues in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Qazi, and Ambassador Wolcott Sanders for their informative briefings on, respectively, the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the Multinational Force.

Iraq is at an important crossroads, as observed in the Secretary-General's report. Iraq — the people and

the Government — continues to be confronted with mounting, complex internal challenges in achieving national reconciliation, ensuring security in communities and promoting reconstruction and development. Of particularly serious concern is the deteriorating security situation, which is characterized by increasing sectarian violence and insurgent and terrorist attacks in many parts of Iraq.

Japan condemns any acts that may contribute to destabilizing the situation in Iraq, including the terrorist attacks in Sadr City on 23 November, which took a heavy toll in innocent civilian lives, and the mass abduction of employees and visitors at the Ministry of Higher Education in Baghdad.

Security provides the necessary foundation for a recovering nation's activities, including reconstruction and development. At the same time, political stability in turn leads to improvement in the security situation. Japan reiterates the importance of ownership of the nation-building process by the Iraqi people in establishing responsible governance by the Iraqi Government and national reconstruction. In this regard, Japan appreciates the continued efforts of the Government of Iraq, under the leadership of Prime Minister Al-Maliki, to promote the National Reconciliation Plan and the Security Plan. It is also imperative that the broader international community actively provide the necessary support to assist the efforts made by the Government and the people of Iraq for nation-building.

In this connection, the positive cooperation extended, and the constructive role played, by the neighbouring and regional countries must not be overlooked. We welcome the recently announced normalization of diplomatic relations between Iraq and Syria, as well as the recent visit to Iran by Iraqi President Talabani, following the visit of Prime Minister Al-Maliki to the country in September. We expect that improved relations between Iraq and the neighbouring and regional countries though efforts such as these will lead to political and security stability in Iraq.

At the end of November the Council adopted resolution 1723 (2006), which extended the mandate of the Multinational Force (MNF). Japan welcomes the fact that Iraqi forces are gradually assuming responsibility for security in substantial areas of the country, owing to progress in training the Iraqi security forces by the MNF. Japan expects that the continued presence of the MNF in Iraq will further facilitate this positive development. We pay tribute to the important role that the MNF has been playing in this area.

Japan also wishes to commend once again the important role that United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has been fulfilling in the Iraq process under challenging circumstances, and to express its strong support for the Mission's activities. In the current situation, we continue to place importance on three areas of UNAMI's mandate-based activities, namely: the promotion of national dialogue, the facilitation of coordination and delivery of reconstruction and development assistance, and assistance in the constitutional and electoral processes.

Japan considers the three elements of political stability, improvement of security and economic reconstruction, to be interlinked. From this point of view, we welcome the advancement of the discussion on the International Compact for Iraq. Broader participation of the international community will be key to the success of the Compact process.

We highly appreciate, in this connection, the cooperation by the Governments of the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait in hosting the preparatory meetings in September and October. By the same token, we appreciate the strong role that the United Nations, through UNAMI, has been playing to promote the Compact process as a co-chair. This includes organizing the Foreign Minister-level meeting on Iraq and the meeting to brief on the developments on the Compact, both held in New York in September and November. Japan looks forward to the finalization and adoption of the Compact at the earliest possible time.

The international community must intensify its support for Iraq so that the country can overcome the present difficulties and make meaningful strides towards becoming a democratic and stable State. Japan, for its part, will maintain its commitment to proactively provide appropriate support in Iraq, mainly in the following two areas.

First, Japan provides airlift support activities to UNAMI and the Multinational Force through its Air Self-Defence Force assets. After concluding its humanitarian and reconstruction support activities in Iraq, for which it deployed its Ground Self-Defence Force contingents, Japan began providing regular airlift services to United Nations personnel to facilitate the

ongoing activities of UNAMI and their possible expansion. The Government of Japan made a Cabinet-level decision on 8 December to extend, until the end of July next year, the Basic Plan regarding response measures on the law concerning the special measures on humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Iraq, which is the framework for Japan's cooperation and assistance to the country. We are pleased to report that that decision will enable Japan to continue to provide airlift support.

Secondly, various projects amounting to $1.5 billion in grant aid have been completed to support Iraqi reconstruction. Additional aid of up to $3.5 billion — made available through a soft loan window, largely for improvement of infrastructure and other economic and social projects — is in the pipeline for steady implementation. It is our pleasure to note that Japan announced yesterday, 10 December, its authorization of two oil and electricity projects in utilizing the soft loan, in addition to the six projects previously announced in fields that include seaports, irrigation, thermal power plants, roads and bridges and oil refineries. We hope that implementation of these projects will begin immediately upon the completion of the necessary procedures for financing. Moreover, Japan will remain actively and continuously engaged in the Compact process, in cooperation with the United Nations and other relevant parties.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): At the outset, let me thank the Special Representative Ambassador Qazi for his briefing and for introducing the Secretary-General's report. We also wish to thank Ambassador Jackie Wolcott Sanders of the United States for her briefing on behalf of the Multinational Force.

We have noted that the United Nations, as co-chair of the International Compact for Iraq, continued to provide support to the Government of Iraq in the development of the Compact process, which is an important framework for mobilizing national, regional and international actors in support of the transition in Iraq. We commend the Secretary-General for convening a high-level meeting, which reviewed progress made in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), and also provided an opportunity for the mobilization of greater and broader international support and engagement with the Government of Iraq.

In addition, we welcome the United Nations as co-chair of the first and second International Compact meetings with the Iraq preparatory group in Abu-Dhabi and Kuwait City, respectively, which recognized the need to complete expeditiously the development of the Compact through a broad consultative process at the national, regional and international levels, and progress made in the drafting of the Compact document, in particular, the inclusion of the political and security sections, as well as the presentation of specific bench marks. We acknowledge the Secretary-General's assertion that the success of the Compact would depend on the ability of the Government of Iraq and the international community to deliver on their mutual commitments. We are hopeful that the Compact will be formally launched sooner, rather than later.

We support the continuous efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to engage key political, civil society, tribal and religious leaders with a view to promoting genuine dialogue and addressing the volatile security situation. He should be encouraged to continue with the strengthening of the legal and institutional foundation of the country and assisting in the promotion of the implementation of the Government's National Reconciliation Plan.

We have also noted that the Office of Constitutional Support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) continued extending its assistance to the Council of Representatives in developing the required legislation for advancing the implementation of the constitution. We note that UNAMI intends to provide strong support to the constitutional review process drawing on best practices from around the world.

We urge the UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance to continue providing support for the process of the transition from the Independent Electoral Commission to the future Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq and for the planning and updating of the voter rolls in preparation for future electoral events.

My delegation remains concerned about the increase in the number of displaced Iraqis due to violence by various elements. The Secretary-General's report informs us that the total number of displaced persons in Iraq is over 1.6 million, while about an equal number of Iraqis have become refugees outside the country since 2003.

We commend the United Nations agencies and their partners for providing food, shelter and non-food items to as many displaced Iraqis as resources permit, and we add our voice to the Secretary-General's appeal for the international community to identify additional means for supporting United Nations agencies in their work with displaced Iraqis.

Given the environment of insecurity and the consequent high level of human rights violations, the Government of Iraq has obviously not been able to honour its promise to promote the protection of human rights and the rule of law. We are, however, encouraged to note that the UNAMI Human Rights Office continues to work closely with Iraqi institutions to strengthen the rule of law and create a strong and effective national human rights system, and we hope that the draft law on the establishment of a national human rights commission will be enacted soon.

We are deeply worried at the continued violence and numerous deaths occurring daily in Iraq. We hope that the appropriate authorities will leave no stone unturned to improve the general security situation in the country, so as to enable the people of Iraq to achieve lasting peace and security. We therefore look forward to the deliberations of the national reconciliation conference to be held on 16 December and to its promulgation of a national hydrocarbon law. We also welcome the decision of the Iraqi Government to send envoys east and west to enlist their support in the quest for peace, because we agree with the observation made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General that an exclusionary approach, whether internal or external, will not result in progress towards peace and stability.

Finally, the deteriorating security situation in Iraq has put severe constraints on the ability of the United Nations to carry out its activities, and its staff continues to be exposed to considerable risks. We hope for an improvement in the security situation that will lessen the risks to which United Nations personnel are exposed, so that the viability of maintaining a significant United Nations presence in Iraq will not be called into question. Indeed, the effective and commendable role being played by UNAMI in developing Iraqi national institutions and in providing for persons in distress may require it to assume greater responsibilities in the collective quest for a united and peaceful Iraq.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I, too, would like to thank the Special Representative, Ambassador Qazi, for his statement, as well as Ambassador Sanders for her statement on behalf of the Multinational Force.

While the political process in Iraq since 2003 in many ways has been successful, the current situation in Iraq presents a very significant challenge to the international community. As described in the Secretary-General's report, over the last three months the situation in Iraq has further deteriorated in many parts of the country, with a significant rise in sectarian violence, insurgent and terrorist attacks, as well as criminal activities, which are now at an all-time high.

Unfortunately, in this difficult environment the Iraqi Government's efforts to foster national reconciliation, stem the violence and accelerate Iraq's economic development have not met with sufficient success.

We remain deeply concerned about the violence perpetrated by the insurgents. The number of human rights violations continues to rise in Iraq in spite of the Government's resolve to promote the protection of human rights and the rule of law. As noted by the Secretary-General, in large areas of Baghdad and in other parts of the country, insurgent and militia activities remain uncontrolled. The number of internally displaced Iraqis is growing and is now estimated at about 450,000. Moreover, reports of mistreatment of detainees at the hands of the Iraqi police and security forces continue. We urge the Iraqi Government to do more to ensure the protection of the rights of all Iraqis. The new Iraq must do better than the old Iraq.

In his observations, the Secretary-General points to the importance of ensuring a fully inclusive political process focused on reaching out to all communities, as well as sharing the country's resources, with a view to the broader national interest. Secondly, the Government must establish a monopoly on the use of force and address the violence in its many forms, including dealing with the militias. Thirdly, there is a growing need for a regional environment supportive of Iraq's transition.

The international community must thus continue its commitment to support Iraq at this critical time. This needs to be done in a variety of ways. In particular, regional and international backing can help

make the Iraq Compact a success and provide the people of Iraq with a fresh start.

At the request of the Iraqi Government, resolution 1723 (2006), adopted on 28 November, renews the mandate of the Multinational Force until the end of 2007. The mandate may be terminated at any time if the Iraqi Government so wishes. The continued presence of the Force is a clear expression of the commitment of the international community to support the Iraqi people.

As underlined by the Prime Minister in his letter to the Security Council dated 11 November, security and stability are the responsibility of the Iraqi Government, and the Iraqi security forces will increasingly play a greater role. The members of the Multinational Force have long supported the training of the Iraqi security forces, and those efforts are expected to continue.

We are pleased to see the increasing capabilities among the Iraqi security forces, which made transfer of security responsibility in Al Muthanna and Dhi Qar possible this year. We hope that, with stronger and more confident national forces and with the continued support of the Multinational Force, the level of violence will decrease and the main focus will be on the reconstruction of Iraq.

In addition, international support for Iraq's reconstruction in the form of financial assistance and contributions to capacity-building must continue and be sustained.

As mentioned, the launch of the Iraq Compact this summer marks a new departure for international support for the realization of the Iraqi Government's plans for a united, federal and democratic society at peace with its neighbours. Denmark stands ready to contribute to that process.

Denmark intends to maintain its presence in Iraq as long as its support is requested by the Iraqi Government and the United Nations and as long as it believes its presence is meaningful. This spring the Danish Parliament decided to extend the mandate of the Danish troops in Iraq until the end of June 2007. Denmark's involvement in Iraq also comprises reconstruction and humanitarian assistance. To date we have committed approximately $90 million.

As I mentioned earlier, Denmark supports an expansion of the role of the United Nations in Iraq. Denmark continues to directly support the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Denmark's decision to comply with a UNAMI request to deploy a C-130 aircraft suitable both for passengers and cargo will be effective shortly.

Iraq stands at a crossroads. The international community must remain committed to supporting the Government's efforts to promote national reconciliation and to improve the critical security situation. The extension of the mandate of the Multinational Force for another year, as well as support for the Iraq Compact, form part of the support that is vital to the development of a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Iraq.

Mr. Matulay (Slovakia): At the outset, I should like to join previous speakers in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Qazi, for his briefing and for introducing the current report, as well as for his valuable remarks and observations. I wish to take this opportunity to commend him in person as well as all United Nations and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) staff involved for the outstanding work they are doing in and for Iraq under very difficult circumstances. I wish also to thank Ambassador Sanders for her report on behalf of the countries that make up the Multinational Force, which include my own country, Slovakia.

As we heard during the briefing, the situation in Iraq remains extremely fragile and complex, requiring our thorough attention and our unconditional support and assistance. That is crucial, especially at this critical time when conditions in Iraq have further deteriorated. A huge task lies ahead of us in order to reverse this process, a task in which the Government and institutions of Iraq need to play a central role.

During the past three years, the people and the leaders of Iraq have clearly demonstrated their commitment and support to Iraq's political transition and have made many sacrifices to achieve that goal. Achievements made to date should not be forgotten or overlooked. We consider the overall improvement of security and the promotion of national reconciliation, human rights and economic welfare to be the leading priorities for the Government of Iraq. Those priorities have to be implemented, mainly through a consensus-based action plan that will address the basic needs,

concerns and aspirations of all of Iraq's communities and constituencies.

In order to achieve progress and success, new and revised approaches are needed. As the Secretary-General suggests in his report, developing a fully inclusive political process, establishing a monopoly over the use of force and cultivating a regional environment supportive of Iraq's transition represent a viable strategy to reverse current political and security trends in the country. In this vein, we remain convinced that a constitutional review process and a review of the de-Baathification process represent important confidence-building measures that can help Iraq tackle its many challenges.

In our view, the strong involvement of the United Nations in Iraq's transition and stabilization process remains instrumental. We, therefore, welcome and support the International Compact with Iraq; the United Nations is strongly engaged and is playing a leading role in developing it. Such an arrangement can provide a tangible long-term framework for the reconstruction and development of Iraq. We also note with satisfaction the recent positive experience with respect to the Compact, in which actors at the national, regional and international levels have been engaged. This is proof of the existence of political will to promote Iraq's transition and stabilization. This political will should be further enhanced and effectively mobilized in fostering dialogue and understanding on all three levels — notably, the regional one.

Contributing to and promoting durable peace and stability in Iraq will benefit not only that country, but also its immediate neighbours, as well as the wider region. In this regard, we feel that Iraq's immediate neighbours in particular could and should play a more active role in promoting that country's peace and stability. We regard their contribution to the success of Iraq's stabilization as instrumental and decisive. Hence, we hope that Iraq will receive the required assistance and support from its neighbours.

Regrettably, the level of violence and insecurity continues to rise in many areas of Iraq, and the mounting civilian casualties remain a source of constant concern. Similarly, we remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Iraq. The effects of the ongoing insurgency, sectarian violence, revenge attacks and militia activities are alarming. We feel that firm measures are needed to reinforce the justice and security systems and to develop a robust human rights agenda in order not only to protect the lives of innocent civilians but also to hold those responsible for violent acts fully accountable.

We urge the Government of Iraq to take concrete measures to end the environment of lawlessness, impunity and insecurity and to prevent the possibility of a humanitarian and human rights catastrophe in that country. We welcome the decision of the Ministry of Interior to intensify the screening of police and thus to help combat the impunity of the Iraqi security forces and increase public confidence in them. We also welcome the draft law on the establishment of a national human rights commission and stress the urgent need to pass this law in the Council of Representatives.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that Slovakia remains committed to the political and economic transition of Iraq. We are one of the troop-contributing countries to the Multinational Force. Slovakia has also participated in a NATO training mission and has organized training for Iraqi military police staff on its soil. We stand ready to assist Iraq through financial and material ways and means as well.

Mr. Biabaroh-Iboro (Congo) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report (S/2006/945) on the situation in Iraq, as well as Mr. Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his oral briefing today. We would also like to thank the representative of the United States for her presentation on the activities of the Multinational Force.

The situation in Iraq, which is strongly characterized by recurring, unabated and varied violence, is of constant concern to my delegation, and requires that innovative solutions be found. The international community, and the United Nations in particular, cannot stand idly by while the situation in Iraq disintegrates, as described in the report of the Secretary-General. Iraq deserves more than the hideous daily suffering of its people living through a virtual civil war.

In spite of all the efforts made on security and national reconciliation by various players, including the Iraqi Government, and the role played by the international community through the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the Multinational Force, the level of violence is not abating to any

significant extent. Indeed, the situation is deteriorating day by day, placing Iraq at the top of the list of places where daily life is becoming impossible and where violations of essential human rights are being trivialized to an extreme. This is reflected in the number of Iraqis choosing to go into exile, in the many dead and wounded both among civilians and among Iraqi and international armed forces.

These many challenges call for a new strategy, which must be taken up by the Government of Iraq. Above all, there must be trust in the Government among the population, which is beset by political and religious divisions. There is thus need for an inclusive political approach in which all Iraqi communities will share in the political power, participate in State institutions and share in the distribution of natural resources. In this regard, the possibility of constitutional review should help lead to stability.

It is also necessary that the Iraqi Government be able to establish a monopoly over the use of force throughout the entire national territory, putting an end to the activities of the militias, which feed on and perpetuate the prevailing instability and violence, and the terrorist groups associated with Al-Qaida and other gangs.

Finally, the Iraqi Government must contribute to creating a regional environment conducive to improving relations with its neighbours. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the meetings of high-ranking Iraqi leaders with their counterparts in the region, in particular those of Iran. Similarly, we welcome with interest the announcement regarding an international conference on Iraq. Peace and reconstruction depend on it. My delegation is equally open to the various proposals put forward and to initiatives aimed at stabilizing the political and security situation in Iraq. These are a prelude to the reconstruction and development of this country, which has been harmed by many decades of war and fratricidal struggle.

In conclusion, we would urge the international community, in particular the key donors, to help Iraq in the effective implementation of the International Compact with Iraq. We hail the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the Multinational Force.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Qatar.

At the outset, I would like to join all my colleagues in warmly thanking Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and Ambassador Wolcott Sanders for their respective briefings to the Council.

This year, the situation in Iraq has been marked by heightened violence and an unprecedented deterioration in the security situation. Recently, the number of victims that have fallen to this violence has reached a hundred a day, a most alarming number. This makes the Iraqi crisis one of the gravest security crises in the world. Whatever name we give to the conflict, there can be no doubt that the security situation in Iraq is critical, not only because of the growing number of victims of violence, but also because of the diverse nature of the violence — terrorist, criminal or ethnic-based — with one form more dangerous than the last. We will nevertheless need to make every effort and explore every avenue to put an end to violence and restore stability and harmony in Iraq.

Qatar continues to reaffirm the need to respect Iraq's territorial integrity and sovereignty, so that the Iraqi people can recover its liberty and security. In order to ensure that, we must pool national, international and regional efforts to implement that priority. The neighbouring countries can play a major role in that regard by helping to stabilize Iraq. Like the international community and the United Nations, they should contribute to setting Iraq on the path towards stabilization and reconstruction.

In that framework, we stress the importance and usefulness of the International Compact with Iraq. Effecting an immediate improvement in the basic living conditions of the Iraqi people and addressing the alarming humanitarian situation are just as important as national reconciliation and strengthening the security forces to ensure Iraq's stability. Beyond the need for a participatory, transparent and inclusive political process that would meet the aspirations of all sectors of Iraqi society, efforts must be pursued to control the deteriorating security situation, so that Iraq's own security forces can maintain security in their own country, a task now essentially assumed by the Multinational Force. That goal is severely hampered by the grave current situation in Iraq, which is a serious obstacle to the efforts of UNAMI in reconstruction, development and the protection of human rights and the rule of law. We cannot leave Iraq to deal with this crisis on its own.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting. Allow me also to convey my thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ashraf Qazi, for his statement earlier in the meeting.

We also thank Ambassador Jackie Sanders for her statement on behalf of the Multinational Force in Iraq. I am likewise grateful to the members of the Council for their statements.

The Secretary-General's report before us provides as usual an overview of the major developments in Iraq in the international and regional contexts over the past three months. It also covers the role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in providing assistance in various fields under the mandate established by Security Council resolution 1546 (2004). In that regard, I would express the appreciation of the Government and people of Iraq to Mr. Qazi and UNAMI for their efforts. We are also grateful to the United Nations agencies, programmes and funds for their assistance, in particular in providing basic social services. We continue to look forward to UNAMI's playing an important and vital role in the coming phase, in particular in the development of electoral institutions and the constitutional review process, in a manner that will strengthen national reconciliation and dialogue. That will, of course, require a larger United Nations presence in Iraq in the near future.

As the Secretary-General's report indicates, Iraq has recently witnessed an increase in acts of violence, terrorism and sectarian bloodshed, in addition to abductions and kidnappings. The situation has prompted those within and outside the United Nations who are concerned about the situation in Iraq to issue serious warnings of a potentially dangerous deterioration of the situation to the very brink of civil war. In that regard, the Government of Iraq is fully aware of who is carrying out those acts and of their objectives. My delegation has addressed this issue repeatedly before the Security Council. Those who carry out such attacks are Saddam loyalists, the Takfiri (charge of unbelief) extremists and criminal gangs. Their ultimate goals may differ, but they share the immediate objective of undermining the entire political process. The Government will deal very forcefully and decisively with that challenge. The political process in Iraq is the fruit of a democratic exercise in the context of which the legislative elections and constitutional referendum were held within the time frame set out in Security Council resolution 1546 (2004). Thus, to defend the political process in Iraq is to defend international legitimacy and the will of the international community.

We reiterate our previous statements to the Council to the effect that the Iraqi people, which has succeeded over the past three years in completing the political and constitutional processes, will also emerge victorious in its battle for national dialogue and reconciliation, the defeat of the terrorists and the preservation of its unity and territorial integrity.

One of the principal factors of success in combating the cycle of violence, terrorism and crime is the broadening of participation in our political process, which seeks to guarantee the active involvement of all political parties and communities in Iraq. To that end, on 25 June 2006, the Iraqi Government adopted a national programme based on national dialogue and reconciliation. The programme is built around a national vision that political consensus is the only way to halt the deterioration of the security environment. That vision was reaffirmed by Iraq's National Security Council at its meeting of 23 and 24 November and by the Prime Minister on 26 November, when he said that

> "sectarian violence will stop only when the politicians agree and understand that there are no winners and no losers in this battle".

In order to strengthen the national reconciliation initiative, the Prime Minister said on 5 December that

> "we intend to convene a national conference of political actors in the near future, to include various Iraqi political organizations, parties and individuals participating in the political process, in order to strengthen national unity and agree on a national charter that will proscribe sectarian strife and create opportunities for cooperation among the various components of the Iraqi people".

Any appeal for an international or regional conference with similar ambitions will be welcomed by the people of Iraq. The Government of Iraq will seek to ensure its success. However, if the purpose of calling for such a meeting is to circumvent the democratic gains made by the Iraqi people and to take the political process back to square one, that will be unacceptable, not only because it will dash the wishes and hopes of the Iraqi people, but also because it runs counter to the resolutions of international legality and the will of the international community.

Parallel to the process of national reconciliation, the Government of Iraq is working to increase its security capacity in order to impose State authority and enforce the law. Likewise, the Government of Iraq is working with the Multinational Force to complete the gradual transfer of responsibility for security to Iraqi forces as soon as possible.

On that basis, and given the Government of Iraq's awareness of the need for the presence of the Multinational Force until Iraqi security forces are able to shoulder responsibility for security, in a letter to the President of the Security Council dated 11 November 2006 (S/2006/888, annex), Iraq's Prime Minister requested an extension of the mandate of the Multinational Force for an additional year, until 31 December 2007 — or until an earlier date should the Iraqi Government so request. The Prime Minister also underscored in his letter the question of transferring responsibility for security to the competent Iraqi authorities, especially as this relates to the Government of Iraq's responsibility for the recruitment, training, equipping and arming of its security forces and for command and control of Iraqi forces and responsibility for the security situation.

With regard to the situation of human rights in Iraq, it cannot be viewed in isolation from the deteriorating security situation. Those rights are daily being violated as a result of the actions of terrorists, violence-mongers and criminal gangs. Clearly, the more the security situation improves, the better the chances for protecting human rights. The Government of Iraq is serious about addressing the situation, both by confronting terrorists and criminal gangs and through the work of Government bodies responsible for justice, law enforcement and prosecuting those who perpetrate human rights violations. But collateral human rights violations resulting from confrontations between Iraqi security forces and terrorists and criminal gangs cannot be put on the same level as deliberate violations of human rights, foremost among which is the right to life, that are perpetrated by terrorist elements and criminal gangs on a daily basis in schools, universities, marketplaces and houses of worship. Such acts take the lives of hundreds of innocent people, including women and children. The difference between the two situations is enormous. We should therefore not confuse matters, so as to retain a sense of reality and truth.

The challenges confronting Iraq are great, and not only in the areas of improving the security situation and addressing the spiral of violence, terrorism and crime. There are also challenges in the areas of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Without the assistance of the international community, Iraq will be unable to rebuild the infrastructure needed to launch the development of its economy by using its human and natural resources to build a prosperous future. This brings to the fore the importance of the International Compact with Iraq, an initiative launched by the Iraqi Government and based on a mutual commitment between Iraq and the international community that aims at establishing a partnership based on a national vision aimed at fulfilling the Iraqi people's aspirations to put in place a democratic federal State and to build a prosperous economy through which Iraq can play its full role as an effective member of the international community.

Once again, we would like to express our gratitude to the United Nations for its efforts in that regard, as a co-chair of the International Compact with the Government of Iraq. Along with the Secretary-General, we look forward to the formal launch of the International Compact with Iraq, whose date and venue are under consideration.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mr. Qazi to respond to comments and questions raised by members of the Council.

Mr. Qazi: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Security Council for affording me this opportunity to present the report of the Secretary-General, along with my comments, and to listen to each member's words of wisdom and support. We have taken serious note of them. These comments will be of enormous help to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) as it goes about fulfilling its mandate in the next phase of the situation in Iraq.

As has been noted, Iraq has been going through a very critical period. What is most critical about it is the level of violence, which is making it difficult for the

initiatives that have been announced, launched and, indeed, implemented, to achieve success and the goals they have set for themselves. Therefore, one of the very first priorities must be to find a way to reduce the debilitating level of violence, which has resulted in a human cost that is among the very worst to be found in the world.

I would like in particular to thank the Government of Iraq for all its support for the UNAMI mission, without which we could not have possibly operated in Iraq. I would also like to thank the Multinational Force-Iraq for all the support they have provided us. I take note of the fact that a lot is expected from UNAMI in promoting national dialogue and helping the International Compact to move forward towards the achievement of its objectives. We shall certainly do that to the best of our abilities.

There was a comment about the need for us to have sufficient staff in order to fulfil all those obligations to Iraq. In that connection, I might just mention that, while we are gratified to note the appreciation and the call for an even more active role by UNAMI, we have to take into account the security situation, which has not been improving. Indeed, it has been deteriorating. Currently the number of our people in Iraq has actually decreased, rather than increased. We hope the security environment will improve to allow us to put an end to the decrease in our personnel — because we have to put the security of our personnel above all considerations. If we work together collectively in support of the efforts of the Government of Iraq, I am sure that those efforts will result in reversing the deteriorating trend in the security situation, enabling UNAMI to deploy the number of people necessary in Iraq itself to assist the Government of Iraq in the achievement of its objectives. When our people are relocated, they are not relocated out of UNAMI; they are relocated in the vicinity, in particular in Amman and in Kuwait. Thus, we are always there, and will be there, to assist the Government and the people of Iraq. But, because of the security situation, at times it is not possible to have the numbers that we would like to have.

With those words, once again, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and all the other members of the Security Council, as well as the Government of Iraq and Ambassador Al Bayati for his kind words of encouragement.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Qazi for the clarifications he has just provided.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Before adjourning the meeting, I should like to inform the members of the Council that the Council will hold consultations of the whole on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, directly following the adjournment of this morning's meeting on the situation concerning Iraq.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.